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ABSTRACT

This course guide for teachers is intended to help students use improvisational acting techniques in exploring problems that affect today's youth. Performance objectives are listed which include: (1) the application of procedures to follow in group problem solving to complete activities to improve concentration, and (2) the analysis of characters from a play to present dramatic character sketches in class. Also included are: "Course Content," which presents the rationale for the course and the specific content; "Teaching Strategies," which suggests teaching techniques for accomplishing the attainment of the performance objectives (among these techniques are tactile procedures, mirror exercises, body movement, group discussions, improvising, showing emotional response, short lectures, role playing, character analysis, and writing activities); "Student Resources," which lists state-adopted textbooks; and "Teacher Resources," which lists supplementary materials for teacher and student use. (WR)

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AUTHORIZED COURSE OF INSTRUCTION FOR THE QUINMESTER PROGRAM

DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

LANGUAGE ARTS

Getting to Know Yourself through Acting

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5113.54
5114.88
5115.88
5116.88
5183.08

DIVISION OF INSTRUCTION • 1971

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LANGUAGE ARTS
(English, Drama)

Written
for the
DIVISION OF INSTRUCTION
Dade County Public Schools
Miami, Florida
1972

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Miami, Florida 33132

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COURSE NUMBER	COURSE TITLE: GETTING TO KNOW YOURSELF THROUGH ACTING
5111.23 5112.29 5113.54 5114.88 5115.88 5116.88 5183.08	COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course utilizes improvisational acting techniques for exploring problems that affect today's youth. Role playing may be alternated to permit different and differing interpretations of characters. Some work on stage concentration and acting techniques is included.

I. PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES

A. Having been given procedures to follow in group problem solving, the students will apply these procedures to complete activities which are designed to improve concentration.

B. Having been given information on how to do a character analysis of a character from a play, the students will analyze characters in order to present dramatic character sketches in class.

II. COURSE CONTENT

A. Rationale

Many students find that through the experience of drama they can learn much about themselves and as a result they can sometimes better solve or at least understand their problems. This is not so much a "straight" theatre or acting class as it is a class in which students may begin to find themselves through role playing, improvisations, and character analysis.

This class should be open to any student without regard to grade level, past drama experience, reading ability or other such criteria. The very title of the course best explains its intended nature. Too much concentration on instruction in the principles of acting or any intricate technicalities of theatre might not be in the best interest of the students who might need time to freely discuss, act out, and seek solutions to problems that are of concern to them.

B. Content

1. Working for confidence by performing simple assignments on stage before an audience (class)

2. Analyzing emotions through role playing and improvisations

3. Studying the elements of character analysis

4. Developing the ability to give and receive constructive criticism

5. Developing the ability to express one's feelings, emotions, and opinions in an acceptable manner

III. TEACHING STRATEGIES

OBJECTIVE A: Having been given procedures to follow in group problem solving, the students will apply these procedures to complete activities which are designed to improve concentration.

1. Bring an assortment of small and unusual objects to class. Ask students to identify the objects as to color, shape, size, and use.

2. Prepare samples of fabrics or other materials of various textures. Ask students one at a time to close their eyes and after feeling each surface to describe it.

3. Have students do mirror exercises. Ask two students to face each other on stage in profile position. Go through exact mirror reflection movements with head, arms, fingers, eyes, mouth, legs, and feet.

4. Ask students to concentrate on a person of a certain age such as a very young person, a very old person, etc. Have students show the character's attitude toward life through body movements.

5. Divide students into groups. Have the students position themselves as inanimate objects. Three students might become a table, two students a chair, several students a car. Each player must be a working part of the whole. Have other players use the objects to perform a short scene. After the exercise ask students to tell how they felt as they portrayed the inanimate objects.

6. Discuss group process with students. Stress such elements as cooperation, planning, taking turns, mitigating selfish aims for the good of the group, etc.

7. Ask students to identify several problems that are significant in the lives of young people. Make a general list from all suggestions made. Ask students to improvise two-minute scenes based on these problems.

   The students may list problems that may be of a delicate nature for group discussion. Depending on the particular school and community, such topics as drug abuse, parental

relationships, divorce, peer pressure, money, prejudice, unemployment, sex, birth control, etc. may turn into traumatic or problematic discussions. Manage the discussion at all times without stifling it. Insist that students respect the rights and feelings of others in these discussions.

8. Have students discuss movies, plays, television programs, and books that deal with such problems as the ones mentioned in activity #7.

9. Briefly review with students some techniques of improvisational acting. Include such elements as the following:

   a. Select one main incident around which to build the scene.

   b. Decide if this incident will be the opening event, the climax, or the conclusion of the scene.

   c. Decide on the general mood of the scene, i.e. serious, comic, fanciful, or realistic.

   d. Suggest entrances and exits by consistent use of the same areas of the stage for these locations throughout the scene.

10. Have small groups of students improvise scenes based on the problems that have been identified ir activity #7. Ask students to show as much emotion as they can in the scenes. Refer to pp. 53-54 of The Stage and the School for suggestions for improvisation situations.

11. Give students practice in showing emotional response. Ask students to practice the acting out of emotional responses in the following way.

    a. Try first to feel the emotion.

    b. Let your face and body respond.

    c. Let the emotion be heard in the voice.

    Have students improvise very short scenes in which they will try to show the following emotions:

grief	bewilderment
anger	pain (physical and mental)
hate	conceit
innocence	scorn
envy	love

Refer students to pp. 177-179 of The Stage and the School for background reading on how to show emotional responses.

12. Prepare a very short lecture-demonstration based on Improvisation for the Theatre by Viola Spolin.

13. Have students work in groups and play roles of family members in original situations.

14. Ask students to improvise situations about school problems. Have students reverse roles and replay situations.

15. Have students write on a slip of paper the major elements of a problem that can be acted out by one or two persons. Place the papers in a box. Students should then pick papers from box and play out the situations that are described.

16. Divide students into groups. Tell each group that it will have an identical set of stage and hand props. Give each group ten minutes to plan a situation. Permit students to present the resulting improvisations to the class. Discuss the differences that will result from different groups using the same props. Relate these differences to differences that occur in the lives of people who have identical circumstances or backgrounds.

17. Ask each student to prepare a self analysis which will be read only by the teacher. Ask students to include in the analysis answers to the following questions.

    a. Who am I?

    b. Who do others think I am?

    c. Am I usually playing a role or am I really being myself?

    d. Am I satisfied being myself?

    e. What do I most want out of life at this point in time?

    f. What does my family or guardian think of me?

    g. What do I want my life to be like in ten years?

    At the end of the course return these papers to students. Ask them if there are changes that they wish to make in their original statements. Permit students to keep the papers. Tell them to keep updating the paper for their own information at periodic intervals.

OBJECTIVE B: Having been given information on how to do a character analysis of a character from a play, the students will analyze characters in order to present dramatic character sketches in class.

1. Provide students with many play scripts and allow them time for free reading of plays. Choice of plays must depend on the ability of students to perceive a character from a script.

2. Through discussion help students to understand how a character is analyzed. Emphasize the following. Character analysis is usually made by examining:

   a. What the character says

   b. What he does

   c. What other characters say about him

   d. What he wants for himself and for other characters in the play

3. Have students write a character analysis of a familiar character from a television program. Have student describe the character in terms of:

   a. What he likes

   b. What he dislikes

   c. His major aim in life

   d. His satisfactions

   e. His frustrations

   f. His motivations

4. Have students select a character from a play or from history. Assuming that most students will select characters from play, have them find out from the reading of the play what the character likes or dislikes, what he wants, whom he considers friend or foe, etc. (Students who select characters from history can find out the same information from reading a well written biography of the historical figure.)

5. Ask the students to think carefully about the character. Students should be able to tell how the character is <u>repelled</u> by someone, or how he reacts to a situation that he <u>dislikes</u>.

Students should also analyze the character enough in depth to be able to tell how the same character is attracted to someone or something, or how he responds to a situation that he enjoys.

6. Ask students to try to draw from their own memory of experienced emotion an emotional foundation for the character that they will sketch in a dramatic scene at a later time.

7. Have student select lines or a short scene from the play in which their chosen character shows his "spine" or motivating force.

8. Ask students to list and analyze any physical attributes that he may have in common with the character that he is analyzing.

9. Have students create the inner circumstances for his character by writing the character's biography up to the point where the play begins. Tell the students to "remain in character" as they write, and to include in the writing such points as family background, education, occupation, economic status, significant interests, and present environment.

10. Have students prepare a two-minute talk in which they describe one day in the life of the character with major emphasis on his thoughts and feelings about actions, people, and objects.

11. Ask students to select from the play that they have chosen several situations in which the character that they are analyzing is involved. Ask students to try to decide what they themselves would do if they were involved in each situation in real life.

12. When students have decided on what their own reactions would be to circumstances similar to those of their chosen characters, ask students to transfer the emotions that they feel to the character that they have chosen. Have students then improvise scenes or monologues for the characters and present same to class.

13. After students have fully explored the activities on how to analyze a character, have them continue improvisations and role playing of problems that are of concern to them.

14. If time permits, provide students with scripts and allow them to prepare a one-act play(s) for their own enjoyment. The presentations may take the form of readers' theatre or conventional theatre.

IV. STUDENT RESOURCES

A. State-adopted textbooks

Albright, Hardie. Acting the Creative Process.

Beck, Buys, et al. Play Production in the High School.

Ommanney, Katherine Anne. The Stage and the School.

V. TEACHER RESOURCES

A. See Student resources

B. Supplementary materials

Albright, H. Darkes. Working Up a Part. A Manual for the Beginning Actor. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1959.

Barnes, Grace and Mary Jean Sutcliffe. On Stage, Everyone. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1961.

Johnson, Albert and Bertha. Drama for Classroom and Stage. Cranbury, New Jersey: A. S. Barnes, 1969.

Mackenzie, Frances. The Amateur Actor. A Theatre Handbook. New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1966.

Spolin, Viola. Improvisation for the Theatre. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1969.

Course Guide of the Secondary School Theatre Conference, 1968.